

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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JOHN THAYER: DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

April 5, 2000

Dennis Braddock, Chair
Washington State Board of Health
PO Box 47990
Olympia, WA 98504-7990

RE: Local Health Jurisdiction (LHJ) compliance with revisions to Chapter 246-217 WAC (Food Worker)

Dear Chairman Braddock:

I have spoken with both Don Sloma, State Board of Health (SBOH) Executive Director and Carl Osaki, SBOH member within the past 45 days regarding the status of local health jurisdiction (LHJ) compliance with Chapter 246-217 WAC relating to Food Worker Cards. Carl listed 5 questions he needed answered to assist the SBOH in determining compliance with Chapter 246-217 WAC and steps the Board may wish to take in facilitating enhanced compliance. Carl's questions were:

- 1) What format is the ("...at least thirty minutes of instruction, including both audio and visual presentations") class taking?
- 2) Are local health jurisdictions (LHJ) using other training procedures in addition to or in lieu of the SBOH standard?
- 3) Have LHJ's who are conducting food worker classes under the revised SBOH rules completed and evaluation (e.g., showing changes in behavior, higher percentage of people passing the test, lower critical items score, etc.) showing the class adds value?
- 4) What impediments (e.g., lack of staff, available classrooms, equipment) are keeping LHJ's from implementing the revised rule and/or causing a scaling back of their food worker training efforts?
- 5) What costs are LHJ's who are conducting classes under the revised SBOH rules incurring (e.g., is it costing more than \$8.00 and if so, how much)?

QUESTIONNAIRE: A questionnaire (copy attached) was sent out to the 34 LHJ's asking for a response by April 3, 2000. A 2-page table showing the results is attached.

DEPARMENTS IN COMPLIANCE: Some significant observations from the questionnaire:

- ◆ 9 new LHJ's have instituted an instructional program
 - ◆ 22 of 24 LHJ's responding have some instructional program with the food worker test
 - ◆ 9 of 24 LHJ's responding show the Seattle-King County video as the instructional program
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COMPLIANCE DATE:

- ◆ 14 of 24 LHJ's responding had a food worker class in place before the rule.
- ◆ 7 of 24 LHJ's responding instituted a food worker class in early January 2000
- ◆ 2 additional LHJ's have instituted a food worker class later than January of 2000.

WHO PROVIDES THE TRAINING?

- ◆ In 14 LHJ's with food worker classes the Environmental Health Specialist provides the training
- ◆ In 4 LHJ's Support Staff assist in the food worker class
- ◆ In 2 LHJ's, Health Educators provide the food worker training

FOREMAT:

- ◆ 15 of 24 LHJ's responding have a 30 minute or more presentation by staff prior to testing
- ◆ 9 of 24 LHJ's responding show the Seattle-King County video as the instructional program

FOOD WORKER CLASS SIZE: Class size varies from 6 to 150. Those LHJ's with the higher population typically have larger class size.

BENEFITS: Most LHJ's who had recently instituted a food worker class noted it was too early to tell if the class had a positive public health benefit. Some encouraging observations were:

- ◆ increased food worker awareness of adequate food handling procedures
- ◆ a decrease in the test failure rate

COST: Those LHJ's who have recently implemented their training programs would not venture a guess as to the cost of the enhanced programs. More importantly, those LHJ's who only show a video have substantially less personnel costs. Finally, the less populated LHJ's have smaller class sizes thus do not have the economy of scale of a larger department that attracts 50 or more food workers per class.

A target food worker card cost for a LHJ with 30 minutes of staff presentation is \$12 to \$14.

PROBLEMS: Most LHJ's who had recently instituted a food worker class noted it was too early to note the key problems associated with meeting the revised 246-217 WAC. Common problems were:

- ◆ the 14-day rule hinders the less populated LHJ's
- ◆ the cost and availability of meeting rooms is having a negative impact
- ◆ time for inspections is reduced by using their Environmental Health Specialist to do the instructing
- ◆ Access to remote classes has been decreased since implementing training

Sincerely,

John Thayer, Washington State Environmental Health Director's Food Committee Chair

Attachments: